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Call On Energy Secretary To Consider Northern Pass Project Alternatives

April 8, 2011

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and Congressman Charles F. Bass (R-NH) today announced their opposition to the Northern Pass Transmission Project as it is currently configured.

In a letter to Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Ayotte and Bass encouraged the Department of Energy (DOE) to study alternative options as it prepares a draft Environmental Impact Statement, including: the feasibility of burying the transmission line; the feasibility of burying the transmission line under the Connecticut River; and the relative impact of using only existing rights-of-way, or other appropriate routes, while also eliminating or minimizing the use of tall towers.

Ayotte and Bass made their announcement after hearing significant input from New Hampshire constituents and meeting directly with key stakeholders involved. They also attended a DOE field hearing on Northern Pass last month in Haverhill, which Ayotte had requested. DOE held seven public forums on this proposal, which were attended by thousands of residents in the state.

AYOTTE/BASS LETTER TO ENERGY SECRETARY:

April 8, 2011

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Re: Northern Pass Transmission Project (DOE/EIS-0463)

Dear Secretary Chu:

As you know, the proposed Northern Pass Transmission Project is of great concern to the people of New Hampshire. To ensure citizens have a full opportunity to make informed written statements for the record, we recently wrote to you requesting that the Department of Energy (DOE) extend the public comment period for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Scoping Process until April 30th.

Given the significant impact the Northern Pass proposal stands to have on our state, we have spent considerable time meeting directly with the stakeholders involved. We appreciated the opportunity to travel to Haverhill, New Hampshire on Sunday, March 20th to personally observe

a field hearing attended by hundreds of area residents. At that forum, we were struck by the depth of concern expressed by local citizens who fear that the project in its present form would irrevocably compromise the region's landscape.

While we appreciate your consideration of our request to extend the comment period, we are also writing to oppose the Northern Pass Transmission Project as currently proposed. Although we recognize the potential benefits that a project of this scale could have on New Hampshire and the New England region, it is vital that we protect our state's economy, natural resources, and quality of life.

We are deeply concerned that this project's proposed route could irreparably damage the North Country – forever changing the face of one of the last unspoiled areas in this part of the country. Protecting one of the region's prime economic assets and pristine landscapes outweighs any possible benefits of the currently proposed project. However, seeking ways to provide long-term energy security for our state from clean and sustainable energy sources remains a goal we should not abandon.

Therefore, we request that DOE study the following alternative options as you prepare the draft EIS:

1. The feasibility of burying the transmission line;
2. The feasibility of burying the transmission line under the Connecticut River;
3. The relative impact of using only existing rights-of-way, or other appropriate routes, while also eliminating or minimizing the use of tall towers.

By studying the relative environmental impact of these alternatives, DOE can help identify whether or not there is an acceptable alternative for this project to move forward.

As you are aware, the seven scoping meetings held in New Hampshire were well-attended and provided an opportunity for concerned residents to express their reservations about this project. We respectfully request that you carefully evaluate and respond to each and every concern raised by our constituents and that your detailed findings be included in the draft scoping report.

The outcome of your Department's review of the pending application by Northern Pass will directly impact the people of New Hampshire. The evidence and feedback presented at the public hearings overwhelmingly indicates that either this project should not be permitted or that alternatives having a significantly less harmful effect on the people of New Hampshire must be found.

Thank you in advance for your prompt consideration of these requests. We welcome any questions that you may have and stand ready to assist in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Kelly Ayotte
U.S. Senator

Charles F. Bass
Member of Congress

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